



**Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP
5-Year Update to USFWS for 2012-2016
6/28/2018
DNRC Missoula Headquarters -- FMB Conference Room
9:30 am to 3:30 pm
Final Meeting Notes**

Present:

Ben Conard	USFWS
Mike Anderson	DNRC
Ross Baty	DNRC
Gary Frank	DNRC
Jeff Schmalenberg	DNRC
Jessica Thiel	DNRC

MEETING NOTES:

HCP Update/Overview

Jeff gave an overview of the agenda, discussed the upcoming HCP reports, and the process of publishing the 5-year report. After this meeting, the Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan Draft 5-Year Monitoring Report will be updated with any changes, finalized, and posted to the DNRC website. During the meeting, both parties went through each commitment in the report. DNRC provided summary information pertaining to each monitoring commitment contained in Chapter 4 of the HCP. DNRC expanded on commitments with additional details when necessary or when the USFWS raised questions.

Terrestrial Monitoring Commitments

Ross led the discussion on the implementation and monitoring of HCP terrestrial wildlife commitments. Ross reminded the group that the HCP grizzly bear commitments are currently contained in the Draft NCDE Conservation Strategy, and would become an important part of those required conservation commitments for DNRC into the future.

-Grizzly Bear Monitoring

- Bear Avoidance
 - Bear training and bear spray has become part of the DNRC culture. No employees were granted authorization to carry a firearm. During the monitoring period, 160 employees reviewed the required training video.
- Visual Screening
 - Ben asked if the visual screening commitment seemed to be providing measurable conservation value for grizzly bears. Ross thought that it was and that it is still practical and useful to implement.
- Annual Road Closures
 - Overall closure effectiveness was 95%. Sometimes there is vandalism to road closures, people drive around them or break locks. Gary discussed how expensive gate maintenance is every year. Jeff talked about the significant strides we have made, mapping our closures and creating the database for them.



- Stillwater Block Transportation Plan
 - Open road amounts were reduced by 18.2 miles. Restricted road amounts increased by 23.8 miles on the Stillwater Block.
- Temporary Roads
 - It is challenging to track the amount of temporary roads in the Stillwater. The Stillwater Unit has 13 to 14 projects going on right now and coordinating when temp roads need to be opened and closed with 6 foresters can be difficult at busy operational times. There are more timber sales than usual since some of the sales were delayed because of the settlement agreement.
- Bear Presence Signs
 - It has been a challenge dealing with vandalism and theft. There is not as much of a problem with the signs located near the unit offices. There is more vandalism in the Swan than the Stillwater. DNRC might redesign them to reduce the problem. Several more will be installed on both units this field season. DNRC has also made considerable efforts to maintain smaller food storage awareness signs in picnic areas and camping areas during the non-denning period.
- Baseline Open Roads
 - Open road amounts were reduced on each administrative unit.
- Expedited Open Road Reduction on Lands within the Cabinet Yaak Ecosystem
 - This required task was originally completed in 2012.
 - This requirement has also been completed for the several parcels in the CYE on Plains Unit that would be added to the HCP under the Transition Lands Amendment that is near completion.

-Canada Lynx

- Lynx Habitat Model
 - Over the past 5 years, there was a correction in a habitat model error in the Central Land Office and approximately 3,000 acres of non-forested habitat were removed.
 - The existing difference in total HCP acres depicted in the tables attached to the report is due to the sale and exchange of lands that removed parcels from the HCP.
- CWD Retention
 - We monitored seven stands before and after logging that occurred in cover types preferred by lynx and all met snag, recruitment and CWD retention requirements. Constant effort is needed to get a representation of greater than 15-inch logs retained in harvest units post logging. Instances where it is typically difficult to meet snag and CWD requirements are where large trees and logs are not present in stands prior to them being logged. Sometimes we were dealing with management issues from the past.
- Advanced Regeneration
 - Some projects have been reviewed during biodiversity reviews. DNRC has been doing a good job keeping patches of advanced regeneration of shade-tolerant trees, as evidenced by field reviews.
- Inventory



- It is an inventory priority to get out and look at the lynx habitat acres in the Seeley Lake LMA to get a more accurate reading of what is on the ground right now and get our suitable habitat acreages back into compliance following the Jocko Fire.
- 15% Habitat Conversion by Decade
 - The USFWS and DNRC discussed the status of each LMA regarding how much habitat has been converted thus far during the first 10-year implementation window. All LMAs are well within compliance of the 15% caps at year six. The Swan LMA is closest to the cap, however, there are 3-4 year planning windows and operation lags that are reflected in the current tabular values. The Swan LMA boundaries will be changing with the addition of new lands under the HCP Amendment and will require a reset and new acreage calculation for the 15% allowable quota per decade for that LMA.
- Road Data
 - Road data is showing that open road amounts are decreasing while restricted roads are increasing. This is showing a trend that we are making progress towards closing open roads.
 - Due to the improvements in road data collection, it has been much easier for foresters to update road data in the field.

Aquatic Monitoring Commitments

Jeff and Mike led the discussion on the implementation and monitoring of HCP aquatic commitments.

- RMZ Harvest
 - Only 206 acres of RMZ harvest during the monitoring period.
- Non-stocked, Seedling/Sapling
 - DNRC expects the non-stocked, seedling sapling size class will change in the Bitterroot and Flathead AAU due to trees growing since the Sula fires.
- Sediment Delivery
 - Through inventories, it has been found that a very small percentage of roads actually deliver sediment to streams (2.8% of inventoried road for the monitoring period). This are the areas that DNRC is focusing corrective actions.
- Road Inventories
 - We are up and running on our road inventories, the technology has caught up with what we need.
 - We are about halfway there with having all road inventories completed within 20 years.
 - We have inventoried about 500 miles in a year and should have all bull trout watershed inventoried in the next few years.
 - 4.5% of all inventoried road did not meet BMP standards. We have been focusing on the hotspots of sediment delivery to fix BMPs. The BMP percentages are consistent with literature from the Northern Rockies.
- Culverts
 - 12.9% of all inventoried culverts did not meet BMP standards.
 - These are being corrected in timber sale contracts.



- Over the past 5 years, 790 miles have had BMP upgrades and maintenance performed.
 - Gary noted that these numbers are right on track with what was forecasted in the HCP.
- BMP Audits
 - 4,635 BMPs were audited in the last 5 years.
 - There was no gross neglect, only 12 major departures, and 92 minor departures.
- Fish Connectivity
 - One site did not meet effectiveness monitoring but it was fixed the next year. 18 sites had corrective actions implemented.
 - There are 81 sites remaining in need of corrective actions or assessment.
 - DNRC achieved the 5-year goal and only one Priority 1 site needs corrective actions.
- Grazing Evaluation
 - Mike and Jeff did field verification of the 30 parcels. 10 sites have had correction actions applied to them to improve riparian habitat conditions.
- CWE
 - 105 CWE analyses were completed on timber sales and permits.
 - More detailed analysis was completed on 59 projects where the CWE Coarse filter analysis determined that there was potential for moderate to high levels of risk.
- LWD Targets
 - Post-harvest LWD levels met or exceeded targets on all streams.
 - We're now using a more current US Forest Service model.
- Stream Shade and Temperature
 - We are seeing a little reduction in shade but it is not impacting the stream temperature.
 - Two sites did not meet our chronic thresholds. One failed for 3 or 4 days in year 3.
 - We have completed monitoring 5 sites. We will continue monitoring 4 sites for the next 3-4 years.
 - Gary remarked that these numbers are also matching up with the ones forecasted in the HCP EIS.
- Timber Sale Inspection Reports
 - We use these reports as one way to communicate with timber sale purchasers.
 - 3,142 reports were recorded on active timber sales.
 - 1.4% contract items needed improvement and 0.2% violated contract requirements.
- Turbidity Monitoring
 - There have been 2 active sites each year of HCP implementation.
 - Monitoring sites have primarily focused on changes to instream turbidity signals downstream of various forest management activities.
 - Results were recently presented at AWRA in Helena (Oct. 2017).
- Redd Study
 - DNRC assumed that redd trampling was present on State lands and developed an alternative monitoring approach then described in the HCP via a cooperative management response.



- DNRC inventoried 135 parcels that supported an HCP fish species and had classified forest grazing licenses.
- Streams were evaluated and prioritized based on habitat quality, spawning potential and livestock access.
- 45 parcels support an HCP fish species with suitable spawning habitat and easy livestock access.
- The next step is to come up with mitigations, timing restrictions, and/or enclosures.
- DNRC will have a formal proposal for the USFWS at the end of this year with potential mitigations.
- Ben suggested consulting with the aquatic coordinator from the Missoula USFWS.

Transition Lands Update/Overview

- DNRC is amending its HCP to incorporate the terms of a settlement agreement and add lands that it acquired since the USFWS issued the incidental take permit in December 2011. The USFWS is proposing to amend the associated permit under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act to authorize additional take of all but one of the species covered in the 2010 HCP resulting from addition of the acquired lands. In compliance with both the National Environmental Policy Act and Montana Environmental Policy Act, a draft and final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement were prepared to evaluate the environmental effects of the issuance of an amended Permit. This Supplemental EIS evaluates the amendment of the 2010 HCP, which represents the incorporation of a Montana 2015 Settlement Agreement in the Stillwater and Coal Creek State Forests and implementing the HCP on 81,416 acres of recently acquired DNRC lands. The draft Supplemental EIS was published in July 2017 and made available for public review. Following a 45-day comment period on the draft Supplemental EIS, the USFWS and DNRC reviewed and responded to comments in writing and modified the EIS and HCP as appropriate. These changes are summarized in the Preface of the FEIS and responses to public comments are included in Chapter 4 of the final Supplemental EIS. The USFWS and DNRC are preparing a record of decision that will be available summer 2018.

Swan Agreement

- Formal 30-day notice of termination of the Agreement will be provided to all Swan Agreement Cooperators Summer 2018. Termination of the Agreement will be finalized upon signature of the Records of Decision for the HCP Amendment FEIS by both DNRC and the USFWS.

New Science (all specific references are contained in the HCP Amendment FEIS 2018)

- A comprehensive review of new applicable science is addressed by DNRC and the USFWS in the FEIS for the HCP Amendment, which included:
 - Current status of the CYE (Kasworm et al. 2015, 2016, and 2017)
 - NCDE trend monitoring report (Costello and Roberts 2016)
 - Grizzly bear movement and habitat use in the Swan-Clearwater valleys (Ruby 2014)
 - Snowshoe hare habitat relationships (Holbrook et al. 2017)
 - Predicting lynx habitat (Holbrook et al. 2017)
 - Lynx Conservation Assessment Strategy – revised (2013)
 - Canada lynx expert elicitation workshop final report (USFWS 2016)
 - Cold water climate shield and salmonid fishes (Isaak et al. 2015)



- Cold water stream refugia (Isaak et al. 2016)
- Trout hybridization (Allendorf et al. 2015)
- Trout hybridization (Yau and Taylor 2013)
- Trout hybridization (Young et al. 2016)
- Trout hybridization (Muhlfeld et al. 2014 and 2017)
- Aquatic invasive species MFWP (Schmidt and McLane 2017)
- Trout hybridization (McKelvey et al. 2015)
- Distribution, status and threats to Canada lynx (Squires 2015)
- Canada lynx corridors (Squires et al. 2013)
- Climate change impacts on grizzly bears and wolverines (Servheen and Cross 2010)
- Columbia headwaters recovery unit implementation plan for bull trout (USFWS 2015)
- Recovery plan for the coterminous United States population of bull trout (USFWS 2015)
- 2017 Montana Climate Assessment (Whitlock et al. 2017)

Compliance with ITP

- Based on the updates at the annual meeting, the draft annual report and continued communication with the USFWS, DNRC is complying with the requirements and terms of the HCP.

Action Items

- DNRC will meet with the USFWS this fall during two HCP Implementation Field Reviews. DNRC will provide the 2017 HCP Annual Report to the USFWS this fall. The 2018 Annual Report and annual meeting is tentatively planned for February 2019.